

# Women Munition Workers Busy Right Here

Thousands of All Nationalities Employed in Jersey Under Excellent Conditions and at Good Wages, With Patriotism Inspiring Many to Highest Effort

By ELEANOR BOOTH SIMMONS.

ENGLAND has nothing on America now—not in the matter of women in the munitions factories anyhow.

While we have the fullest sympathy with our allies and were heartily glad that Jane Bull was measuring so nobly up to the task set her for making fuses and shells and explosives for John Bull to fire at the Boche there has been in this country just a little feeling of envy, just a little shame that American women were so slow to wake to what the great war should mean to them. Knitting and selling thrift stamps and preserving fruit for the soldiers is all very well, but there's grimmer work for the women if they are to be a really effective second line of defence.

Well, now they're waking up. Three thousand of them, over in the plant of the International Arms and Fuse Company at Bloomfield, N. J., are broad awake, working away with all their might nine hours a day in those grimy, noisy buildings set in the gray and barren Jersey flats. No glamour lights up that work, no military bands, no marching in uniforms with bright buttons—there is none of the pomp and panoply of war. Just steady work for a fair living wage and the incentive of knowing they are helping their Uncle Sam.

On the other hand the buildings are lighter and more sanitary than is the average shirtwaist or hat factory, the air is better than the air the East Side factory worker breathes, and the minimum pay is \$11.98 a week, with the possibility, for girls who can learn to operate turret lathes, of earning up to \$36 a week or so.

## All Nationalities Apply.

It is a mixed and various crowd that streams every morning at 7 o'clock from the boarding houses of Bloomfield and Newark, and from New York by way of the tube, into those low buildings shut in by fences and barred and guarded gates. About every nationality under the sun is there—Italians and French, Serbians and Rumanians and Lithuanians, English and Scotch and Irish, straight Americans, and even some Germans.

The Germans generally apply under some name intended to hide their nationality, a bit of camouflage that doesn't work, for every applicant is carefully investigated.

It would be asking too much of course to expect that the majority of these women had gone into munitions making from motives of pure patriotism. I rather got the idea that they had done so when I dropped in one Saturday morning at the municipal employment place at 53 Lafayette street, which was being used as a recruiting station for munitions workers.

The first girl I struck was a pretty Scotch girl, who said her name was Wilkie, and she had two brothers at the front, and she wanted to do something to help the war. The next I talked with was Georgette Blangy, a French dancer whose dancing days were over because she had hurt her kneecap, and she didn't care because her sweetheart, George Thibaud, who used to drive in automobile

races at Sheepshead Bay, has gone to pursue the Boche in an airship, and she couldn't be happy doing anything that hadn't something to do with the war.

Then there were little, frail old ladies, burning with the wish to serve, who when they were turned down by the examiners because they were past the age limit, insisted on going over to Bloomfield to see if the authorities there wouldn't be less hard hearted. Yes, there was a fine crop of patriotism at 53 Lafayette street, and when I went over to Bloomfield the next week I expected to find that factory manned and womaned with 6,000 workers, male and female, all with one great motive in common, the motive of serving Uncle Sam.

An inconspicuous place it is. If those

"We bring it by the teacup from Crow Hill, where our magazines are," laughed Major Hawkins. "The women handle very little of it. They fill the small fuses with powder, but it is the men who fill the heavy shells, and even they need have no accidents if they are reasonably careful. Sometimes they let the table get covered with powder and drop a steel tool on it—and then there's a flash and a blowup, and maybe a man gets his hands and eyebrows singed. But the fire can be confined to the one small room."

Well, as I said, I went to Bloomfield expecting to find a lot of women who had thronged to the work out of patriotism and nothing else. I got my first jolt when I stopped to talk to a pretty girl who was operating a turret lathe.

they couldn't try, and they seem to be making good. I didn't wonder at the flush of enthusiasm on the face of the tall young girl I talked with. She seemed to admit that it was hard.

"It's just good healthy exercise," she cried. "You go out of here at night like a child that's been playing all day. And sleep—how I do sleep! I don't believe I turn over once all night."

Most of the work isn't so exciting, but on the other hand most of the girls don't have to stand—they can sit down at tables in well ventilated rooms all day. In groups of one hundred they sit drilling tiny holes with electrically driven tools in the cylinders of brass that are to become primers.

It's disappointing to find that so few of the girls dress the part. The English girls look so nice in the pictures of them in workmanlike smocks and caps. A few of the Bloomfield workers satisfy expectations in delightfully grimy smocks or long gingham aprons, and while the latter are obviously adapted for the kitchen they look better than just a girl's dress.

It's the college girls who wear appropriate smocks and low leeled shoes and caps—yes, there are college girls at Bloomfield. They are the ones who are driven by duty or lured by the great adventure of war, because, as a rule, if they have to earn their living they could do something easier. But there they come along with Bridget, the Irish laundress's daughter, and Francesca, the Italian immigrant, all of them together in the great democracy of labor.

## Workers Well Safeguarded.

The officials do all that men can do to keep the place as it should be. Not long ago a man opened a hotel across the way. Major Hawkins became convinced that his influence was doubtful, and now the hotel keeper has been expeditiously removed and a Young Women's cafeteria replaces the hotel. There 270 girls can be seated at once, and when the noon whistle blows that cafeteria is some crowded!

There's a dining room for the officials and welfare workers in the factory, but until the Y. W. C. A. enlarges its accommodations many of the women have to bring their own lunches. They seem content to do this, and at noontime sit around in bunches in the workrooms munching sandwiches and chattering.

Matrons, one for every unit, move about, and the atmosphere is nice and friendly. Sometimes there are "big sings" in the evening, and St. Patrick's day some of them had an all-green festivity, a supper which they attended with shamrocks in their belts. They have a trench paper too, edited by Miss Annie Mathews, and written wholly by talent inside the factory.

Looking at those girls it is hard to realize that they are engaged in such a serious business. Some are serious and gray haired, but many are just girls, saucy and giggly, with their hair frizzed and earrings depending from their ears. But what do the frizzes matter if they work well with their hands?—and they do.



Drilling key pin holes in fuses.

German Zeppelins we are always expecting were to come over here to bomb us they would have a hard time locating the plant of the International Arms and Fuse Company. It spreads over a lot of ground—ground is not valuable in that part of New Jersey—but none of the buildings is more than one story, and with their dull gray tints they melt at a little distance right into the dull gray earth.

The whole thing is arranged on the unit system. One hundred girls—or one hundred men—make a unit, and this unit works in a room of its own, apart from the rest. So if there were an explosion of powder it wouldn't spread far; but as a matter of fact there are seldom explosions and the chance of danger is almost nil. Very little powder is brought in at a time.

Tall and vigorous, she stood in the grimy smock that hid her dress, grasping the spokes of the wheel, turning it deftly, watching with an eagle eye as the machine ground the hollow place in the tube of brass and the oil spurted out and the flakes of brass dropped at her feet.

"It must be fine to think you're helping the war along," I said to her.

"Oh, I don't know," she said nonchalantly. "We get good money at this—that's what I like."

Well, I thought, what did it matter? She was doing her work well, she was turning out a large number each day of those little brass tubes threaded at both ends, and what did it matter what her motive was?

It is highly exciting, this work at the lathes. The girls haven't been doing it long, but they asked Major Hawkins if

## Rumania, the Belgium of the Balkans, May Yet Survive

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speaking Rumanian or for wearing their national costumes. Still the best of Rumanian literature was written by the Transylvanians and their poets sang the national aspirations of the country.

Such a reunion of the "Ginta latina" will bring a new era of civilization to the Orient with Bucharest as the centre of its culture.

But by far the greatest danger, even greater than that of the Teutons, to Europe, not alone to the Balkans, looms from Hungary. Pried loose from Austria, the Magyars, cousins of the Turks, will again return to their arrogant imperialism started by Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary from 1458 to 1490. Since the time of Szechenyi, in the early nineteenth century, the Magyars believed themselves capable of denationalizing the lesser peoples in their immediate neighborhood so that they might have the honor of sharing in the triumph of Magyarism. It always was the ambition of Hungary to

conquer and administer the affairs of the Balkans.

Should the power of the Magyars grow as a consequence of this war the danger to the development of Rumania will grow in like proportions. The Magyars are the most militaristic nation of Europe. Conquest is in their very blood. They are the Teutons of the Balkans.

Even a slight perusal of history is enough to convince one of their dangerous character. Docile and arrogant, abject slaves, though horrible masters, stupid yet cunning, they have drenched Europe in blood more than once. The only nation they ever lived with on friendly terms was Turkey, to whose invasion they readily submitted, allowing the Crescent to fly over their citadels.

Poor Rumanians! The only Latin people in the Balkans! Surrounded by so many different races! Each jealous of the other and all jealous of Rumania!

But whatever the future may yet hold in store for them, the Rumanians cannot be absorbed by any other nation. They

withstood all the invasions of the barbarians, have weathered the terrible Turk, the onslaught of the Magyars, the repeated treachery of the Russ, the rapacity of the Greek fanariots, and they will not be destroyed by the Teutons, however adverse the outcome of the war may be.

Due to the democratic tendencies of the modern world and the people of Rumania the best system of government would be one formed on the lines of the French or Swiss republic.

The frugality of the people combined with their industry as well as the richness of the country will help Rumania to work out her own salvation in a comparatively short time.

We shall again hear the shepherd's flute as he leads his flock into the valleys late in the autumn, and see the iron bite the ground in the spring as the fattened oxen pull at the plough. The river fronts of Braila and Galatz and the port of Constantza on the Black Sea, will soon again swarm with ships of all nations. The mines will again be worked, the

doors of the universities will be opened. The nation will come to life again.

For it is inconceivable that the allies of Rumania will permit her to be strangled to death by the Teuton monster. Such action would be the greatest blunder and alienate forever from France and England the whole of the Balkan peninsula.

The world will understand that Rumania's separate peace with the Teutons was not dictated by the same motives as the peace the Russians made. The world will understand that Russia's collapse and treachery have brought the little isolated nation to its knees.

It is an old economic axiom that an enforced bargain is theft. Whatever Rumania was forced to sign away when the Teuton knife was at her throat will become one of the traditional scraps of paper.

The future peace of the world demands that Rumania keep her former natural borders as well as her port on the Black Sea.